

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

2615 S. GRAND AVE., SUITE 100  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90007



United We Stand



Joseph N. Smith  
Director

## MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, June 8, 2011

### Present:

#### Commissioners

Bob Archuleta, Chair  
Carvel Gay, Vice Chair  
Dave Culmer  
Fred Flores  
Ramon Rodriguez  
Steve Rosmarin  
Stephanie Stone

### Absent:

#### Commissioners

Mark MacCarley  
Rudy Garcia

### County Department

#### **Military and Veterans Affairs**

Colonel Joseph Smith, Director  
Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary

#### Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Bob Archuleta called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by veteran Carlos Venegas, Veterans Pilot Program of Goodwill Southern California. For lack of quorum at last month's May meeting the April minutes had not been approved, therefore Commissioner Gay motioned to approve the minutes of April 13<sup>th</sup> and it was seconded by Commissioner Gay and they were approved unanimously. In addition, Commissioner Rodriguez motioned to approve the minutes of May 11<sup>th</sup> and it was seconded by Commissioner Rosmarin and they too were approved unanimously.

#### Roll Call

As noted above.

#### Chairman's Report

Chair Archuleta expressed his thanks to all veterans on this solemn occasion and to the families of warriors and our fallen who have served country. He extended a special acknowledgment to the Gold Star Mothers and the Blue Star Mothers this Memorial Day.

Chair Archuleta stated he participated in an event with the Gold Star Mothers and had a chance to speak with them and gave thanks to them for their ultimate sacrifice in support of country and flag. Also attended an event in Los Angeles City and had to correct the people attending the festivities, that this was not a celebration like Veterans Day; this is a solemn occasion to remember.

Commissioner Rosmarin introduced 2 people from the West Los Angeles Home, Miguel Gonzalez and Jeanne Bonfilio.

**Veterans Advisory Commission Meeting**  
**Minutes of June 8, 2011**  
**Page 2**

**Comments from Audience (three minutes each)**

Ruben Treviso, American GI Forum, stated that the returning troops coming through Long Beach are looking for jobs. There are approximately 18 Iraqi veterans committing suicide every day. Mr. Treviso stated that putting veterans to work helps them assimilate returning back into society. In the Native American community the process of healing is better and there is a lower instance of PTSD.

Carlos Venegas, Vietnam Era Veteran, and Manager for the Veterans Pilot Program funded through the County of Los Angeles and the Workman Investment Board. The program will be also be addressing the needs of the spouses as well as those of the veteran.

Chair Archuleta pointed out that the County of Los Angeles has a point system for veterans. Veterans are given additional points when tested though based on time of service not all veterans are given points. Chair stated that every veteran should be given an opportunity and be treated fairly. Chair instructed staff to inquire and provide the Commission with copies on the Veteran Internship Program.

Ruben Treviso stated that 86,000 Marines stay at Pendleton; California takes in a large number of returning veterans. Mr. Treviso stated that the number of veterans noted in the Census is underestimated; he's worked in the Census in 2006 and 2010.

Chair Archuleta stated that there needs to be more resources to help our veterans; he knows that all five Supervisors support the veteran community. He asked that staff invite to next month's meeting a representative from EDD to discuss "Putting our veterans back to work or into the workforce."

Commissioner Culmer stated that there is a veteran preference that applies to all veterans that apply for a federal job. There is an additional 10-points given if he/she was a combatant veteran, if not there is a 5-point veteran preference.

Commissioner Stone stated that the process is very convoluted and she'd like to know whose mentoring them to go through this application process?

Ron Hansel stated that the "Vet Hunters" a group of current and former military members will ride their bicycles 1,900 miles in search of help for homeless veterans. The ride will start July 27<sup>th</sup> in El Monte and conclude August 10<sup>th</sup> in St. Louis where they plan to plead their case to help in front of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki. About a dozen active-duty, former US service members and some homeless veterans staying at Salvation Army Bell Shelter will join in the bike ride to St. Louis.

Duke Russell, founder of Abe Lincoln Remembrance, and WW II veteran stressed the need to have a sports field at Los Angeles City College. He reissued his request that the Commission assist in petitioning the Governor Brown to save the field. He distributed copies of a letter that he sent to the Governor and requested that each Commissioner send their own letter to the Governor supporting the need to save the sport field.

Commissioner Rosmarin stated that everyone should support and attend the Harley Davidson Charity Ride (flyer inside the Commissioners packet) scheduled for September 11. He stated that Colonel Smith is a sponsor as is General Gravett who will also be riding his bike in support of the Veterans Home. Commissioner Rosmarin introduced Jeanne Bonfilio, Public Information Officer, Veterans Home of California, stated that currently there are 41 residents and 15 on the way in at the Home. The skilled Nursing Unit will open in February 2012. Ms. Bonfilio stated that there is no waiting list at the Lancaster and Barstow Homes and there has to be no service related disability to be accepted. She expressed her thanks to everyone that participated at the Los Angeles National Cemetery. Ms. Bonfilio asked why a big expo couldn't be held for veterans once a year at a very large venue like at the Staple Center or the Coliseum and invite all the veteran organizations, service clubs to participate.

Commissioner Gay said it was a good point and the Kiwanis Club was involved in Van Nuys Armory packing. Commissioner Stone stated that she likes big ideas because too often we think small.

## **Veterans Advisory Commission Meeting**

**Minutes of June 8, 2011**

**Page 3**

### **Bob Hope Patriotic Hall Renovation Update – Bill Gelpi**

Bill Gelpi, Principal Facilities Project Manager, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, stated that he's been involved with the Project for the last 6 years. Mr. Gelpi provided the following updates:

- There is a new state-of-the-art kitchen, meeting and dining room combination in the basement.
- The Auditorium is fully ADA (Americans with Disability Act) compliant.
- The building has gone through a photometric study; there was a special meeting held to cover lighting requirements.
- Collaborating with the Art Commission to refurbish the Lundeborg Mural and the Lobby will be era correct.
- In the 10<sup>th</sup> Floor Gym the floor has been reconditioned to mitigate noise.
- Completion date is mid-August 2012.

Commissioner Stone asked if they had encountered any "surprises or challenges" while refurbishing the Building? And Mr. Gelpi answered that there were numerous amounts of hazardous materials created in 1925 that were found throughout the building. The carcinogenic used during this time period was lead, mercury, asbestos, etc.; hence a very aggressive abatement program had to be implemented to deal with the hazardous materials problem.

Mr. Gelpi informed the Commission that a parking structure is not part of this project but in foreseeing that one may be built in the future they have added extra conduits in the ground at the existing parking lot for the building of a future parking structure. He stated that he is aware that Colonel Smith is in negotiation with the CEO for a multi-level parking structure.

Chair Archuleta thanked Mr. Gelpi on behalf of the Commission and stated that he saw the pride and care that Mr. Gelpi expressed in his presentation. He stated that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has allowed the building to continue to be for veterans and he thanks them for all the support they give to the veterans.

### **VASH Vouchers**

Ron Hansel, President, San Gabriel Valley Veterans Employment Committee stated that he in regards to the 10,000 returned vouchers they were "not returned" by the County. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is not able to oversee more than the vouchers already allocated to them because the Department does not have enough staff to serve veterans.

Commissioner Rodriguez stated that per MG Mock's request he and the Department have been helping a veteran and wife who miscarried find housing and food. He recommended that each Commissioner ask their respective Supervisor for \$20,000 from their discretionary fund for the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs to monitor a special VA Fund. It was then motioned: "Each Commissioner to approach their Supervisor for \$20,000 each to be put into a fund and monitored by the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs so they can provide emergency assistance to veterans when needed." Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gay and all were in favor.

Commissioner Culmer stated that once again he'd like to bring up the "effectiveness of the Commission" and the fact that there are only 8 Commissioners out of 10. He's previously requested that Commissioner MacCarley be replaced because of the constant lack of quorum and unable to make decisions and vote. He stated that he's made several attempts to contact his Supervisor about the vacancy for the Second District on the Commission with no results. He'd like to know if Colonel Smith can find out if there can be a temporary appointee to Commissioner MacCarley's seat and a permanent appointment for the Second District vacant seat.

Chair Archuleta agreed with Commissioner Culmer as the need of having a quorum.

### **Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report – Colonel Joseph Smith**

Chair Archuleta suggested foregoing the reading of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Department Report in lieu of Colonel Joseph N. Smith, Director's absence and accept the report as written

**Veterans Advisory Commission Meeting**  
**Minutes of June 8, 2011**  
**Page 4**

**New Business**

Reintegrating returning veterans back into the workforce.  
Regional Office – Dennis Kuewa

**Item's for Next Month's Agenda**

Veterans Home Support Committee – Steve Rosmarin  
VASH Vouchers

Commissioner Gay will invite two Veterans for July's meeting to offer the Invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Good of the Order**

Commissioner Flores; gave thanks for everyone well wishes and support and had nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Stephanie Stone; announced that the Women's' Stand Down will be held in Long Beach on July 15<sup>th</sup>. The Women's' Conference will be in Ontario and the 9/11 Event – 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will host the Marine Corps Band of San Diego.

Commissioner Rosmarin; stated a great Memorial Day event at the National Cemetery with 2,500 people in attendance. He was in New York and visited Ground Zero.

Commissioner Culmer; nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Rodriguez; stated he was a key speaker on Memorial Day at Carson and Long Beach events. The Am Vets Thrift Store's Grand opening will be on June 16<sup>th</sup> and Supervisor Knabe and various dignitaries will be attending. On Friday Camp Pendleton will be hosting a Pow Wow for tribal veterans in the State of California.

Commissioner Gay; stated he understands Commissioner Culmer's concerns and he asks that everyone be patient. He trusts that the situation will be resolved soon and will wait for the Supervisor's decision.

Commissioner Archuleta; Thanked the Commissioners for the work they do everyday. Thanked Commissioner Culmer for working with the veterans everyday. He's glad to see Commissioner Flores healthy and at the meeting. He thanked Commissioner Stone for her passion to help women veterans and for her leading the helm as past Chair. On a personal note, his son Capt. Brandon will be receiving his 2<sup>nd</sup> Bronze Star. His idol is Gen. Petraeus and not his own father. His other son Matthew is a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. going to Ranger school and after he graduates he will part of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne.

Motion to adjourn meeting by Commissioner Rodriguez and seconded by Commissioner Gay. Chair Archuleta adjourned meeting at 3:30 p.m.

Tatiana Rosas  
Executive Secretary  
June 8, 2011

Note: The next Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, July 13, 2011 at 1:30 p.m. in Suite 100 at the Department of Public Social Services site at 2615 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA.